6/23/72

Dear Howard (no cc),

Your letters postmarked the 21st and dated 19 and 20 (2) to which you referred last night arrived this morning. As I think you both anticipated and detected, your call disturbed me much, more on the faithlessness of Gary and Jerry than on the Wecht ego-tripping, whether or not you realized it last night, as I believe you did or deduced. I have felt as a father toward those two, and that both would combine on such a reprehensible thing is a blow from which I shall neither soon nor easily recover.

I did not even go out for the mail until noon. Instead, beginning when I got up and after doing a few postponed things, I began writing the letter to EMK that will be enclosed. Lil is reading and correcting it, something she began just before lunch. I will not reread it. When I went out for the paper, as is my usual practise when I do not plan to go into town, I mail the letters I have written by placing them in our box. The rural carrier picks them up when he leaves the days mail. I wrote Gary and Jerry right after you called. A copy of that letter is also enclosed. You did not say on the phone what you do in your second letter of the 20th, that you want what you told me to be confidential. So, if I have done what you wanted me not to, I was unaware of it and it is now too late to undo it. You will know when you read that letter. Because I must now return to the posting of corrections on PM, I shall not take time for what is now meaningless. All you said last night is first, that you had written me and didn't want to talk about it on the phone and then that peehaps you'd best tell me. There was no mention of confidentiality.

My letter is self-explanatory. Knowing my feeling for those two, Lil, after reading what I wrote last night, asked me if I didn't want to wait. She is in accord with what I said but, knowing the deep affection I have had for both, wanted me to be sure that I wanted to break off. I see no laternative and I want to get this entire sordid mess as far into the back of my mind as soon as I can. It was not my intent to compromise you, if I did. I do not recall exactly how I put it and I may not have. Before going to bed, and I finished a novel after I did before falling asleep, she and I discussed this further. I asked her if she really wants either or them here again and she does not. I asked her if she can find any excuse for what either ot them did, or any justification, and she could not. Is there anything more to be said or asked or answered?

Please realize that you quote Sylvia as saying that she had not heard from Jerry for 2½ weeks, when he sent this to her - and that Jerry was down here <u>after</u> that and said nothing. He had seen all of that here, in confidence and knew my attitude and belief about the hazard inherent in all of this. Gary is a stiffer dose, and I will not burden my emotions with him now. If you'd like you can read the post-Wed part of that file when next you are here. (I have one more letter to write before I get to PM and I will send you a copy.)

Because you neither asked nor even suggested that this was something you want confidential when you phoned last night, I immediately did what I considered necessary. Thus I address only your concluding paragrpah now. You say in it that it strikes you that more and more people are doing a hell of a lot of things behind my back and ask whether or not it will rob me. And hurt. Of course it will. It is inevitable. It might kill any possibility for PM that the scandal Cyril can make may generate. You know that despite this possibility oof selfish interest I have done what I could to discourage that, so, I suggest that your formulation is too simple. If it is true that there is all this reprehensible personal behavior and that the effect is to steal from me, I also ask you to consider whether the potential for hurt to all of us and to truth is not more significant that the cheap theivery. I think this is past simple dishonesty and deliberate breach of trust. It can be the greatest loss the quest for truth has yet sustained. I would be kidding both of us if I suggested that my letter to EMK can undo it.

With regard to you, I told you what I believe last night. It is your conscience you must satisfy, not mine; your beliefs to which you must be true, not mine. Whatever you decide, I will have no comment unless you solicit it. Remember- and live by- Polonius' advice. You have, I hope, a long life ahead of you. The important thing is not to be right but to do what at any given time you sincerely believe to be right. We sometimes look back, with the enhancement of vision that can come from hindsight, and realize that we did not do right. The only way an honest man can survive this is to be certain of his intentions as of the time of any decision he makes. Perfection is not a state of man. We all err, all make wrong decision. I would have preferred to remain silent on all of this last night. As you can see, I am not addressing the substance today. It is your decision, and whatever you sincerely believe to be correct at the time you decide, I will respect andwithout talking with her about this, I am without doubt Lil also will. At our years we also look back on more than enough mistakes, our own mistakes, not to realize that they are part of life. Do what you now believe is right and whether or not we agree with it, we will respect it and you. I illustrate this with what Lil can fairly call my error made over her expressed doubt. She has long felt and said that I am too trusting of too many people. Despite her personal liking of Jerry, she has repeatedly warned me that he is a blabbermouth, whatever his conscious or subconscious reason. If this does not address Gary, of whom she has never held any such opinion, it gives her rground for leginitate complaint she has not to this moment made. She knows I did what I felt was necessary for the common good. It turns out to be wrong. But she understands my intent. I add merely this thought: could it be more inconsistent with what I am sure is a veritable drumbeat of propaganda to which you have bee subjected?

Your earlier 20: Please thank your mother for the check. If I have not told you, and I think and hope I have, your parents are unique in recognizing that slight as it may be to most people, the cost of an extra mouth can be a considerable burden to us in our circumstances. In one week, and with no income, we served an extra 30 meals. It is thoughtful of them. We do not expect it. But that they do think of it means much to us. Please thank thhem.

Lil is glad you got the plant home ok. If she did not tell you, it is a scarley violet. If you have any questoons about husbandry, ask her. She knows; I do not. It is not com on.

Your 19:I don't want to take more time now for the bugging bit. I think it was a Cuban operation, Republican-connected, not Mitchell's or Dole's, which is what I told Jerry. It will now go onto the back burner. I have spent much backgroubding time on this. I have seen the NYTimes of 6/21 only. I have seen no other reporting than the Post's and that in its early edition only. I don't think the men wanted to get caught. You have to know these special kinds of nuts, the anti-Castro Cubans. Remember the phrase in O in MO: They couldn't even take Burdine's. They can't do anything right if there is an alternative. I don't even consider your Howard ver/paranoia theory. And I am willing to believe that they were caught only because of the consummate stupidity, the unnecessary and anti-paranoid operation of the totally unnecessary and counter-productive, the removal of their bugs. Remember, the Dems are about to move to Miami. I do not think this was a CIA operation, either.

I appreciate your call of last night and your letter. I add one more thing: unless Ned got the docs independently of me from the Archives, which we know he did not, he is legless. If I have to be my own lawyer, I will go after him any anyone else on this. None of them knew of it independently. I do have a contfact with Ned. This was of such a nature that, unlike my other discoveries, the Archives seems not to have dared to call it to the attention of others. I have, by the way, sent a copy of my Gary/Jerry letter to Mock asking that he read and return it without copying and to no other critic. I said there was too much before the fan as it is.

Don't worry about us. Our regard for you will not change with disagreement, if what you decide is not what we would prefer. Do what you think is right. Only be as sure as one can be.

Our best,